

Alternatives to Logical Consequences

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Punishment (even when a poorly disguised as a consequence) is designed to make kids PAY for the past.

Positive Discipline is designed to help children LEARN for the future.

1. Focus on the future instead of the past.

One clue that we are more interested in punishment (in the name of consequences) is when the focus is on the past rather than the future. The focus is on making kids "pay" for what they have done (poorly disguised punishment) instead of looking for solutions that would help them "learn" for the future.

2. Focus on solutions instead of consequences.

Instead of imposing logical consequences, involve children in thinking of solutions. It is a mistake to think there must be a logical consequence for every behavior, or that a logical consequence will solve every problem.

3. Get kids involved in solutions.

Kids are our greatest, untapped, resource. They have a wealth of wisdom and talent for solving problems when we invite them to do so.

The benefits are numerous. They have the opportunity to use and strengthen their skills; and they are more likely to keep agreements in which they have ownership. They develop self-confidence and healthy self-esteem when they are listened to, taken seriously, and valued for their contribution. They experience belonging (connection) and significance. When they feel belonging and significance they feel less inclined to misbehave and more willing to learn from their mistakes with optimism.

4. Help children explore the consequences of their choices through curiosity questions (instead of imposing consequences on them).

Exploring is very different from imposing. Curiosity questions help a student explore the consequences of his or her choices in a way that leads to solutions. What happened? What do you think caused it to happen? How do you feel about it? How do you think others feel? What have you learned from this? How can you use what you have learned in the future? What ideas do you have to solve the problem now? These are just examples, not to be used as a script. Be in the now and be curious about "getting into the child's world."

This is very different from teachers telling children what happened, what caused it to happen, how they should feel about it, and what they should do about it. Education is derived from the root *educare*, which means, “to draw forth.” Too often adults try to “stuff in” and then wonder why their words go in one ear and out the other.

5. Allow consequences instead of imposing consequences (punishment).

If a child doesn't study, failing may be the obvious consequence. Allow child to experience his or her feelings. Avoid rescuing. Show empathy. When the child is ready, use curiosity questions to help the child explore what the consequences mean to him or her. What does he/she want for the future? What does he/she need to do to accomplish what he/she wants?

6. Allow suffering.

Adults should never make children suffer, but allow them to suffer. Through the suffering they can build their "disappointment muscles" and gain a sense of capability in the process. For example, if children don't get the toys they want, they may "suffer." This will not hurt them and may have great benefits. The great benefits come from using the many Positive Discipline tools we teach: validating feelings without rescuing, allowing a cooling of time and then involving children in solutions, involving children in solutions in advance through family/class meetings, routine charts, wheels of choice, deciding what you will do and letting kids know what you are going to do and then following through, asking curiosity questions, to name a few.

7. Decide what you will do. Inform in advance. “I will read when everyone is ready to listen.” “I will listen when you speak in a soft voice.”

8. Follow through (Shut your mouth and act with kindness and firmness)

9. As soon as _____ then _____ “ As soon as you clean up, then you can go outside.”

**10. At least hardly ever! When consequences are appropriate, use the formula:
Opportunity = Responsibility = Consequence**

For every opportunity students have there is a responsibility. The obvious consequence for not wanting the responsibility is to lose the opportunity. Students have the opportunity of using the school playground equipment during recess. The responsibility is to treat the equipment and other people with respect. When people or things are treated disrespectfully it would be a logical consequence for that student to lose the opportunity of using the playground equipment until he or she is ready to be respectful again. These consequences will be effective only if they are enforced respectfully and children have another chance to have the opportunity to use the equipment as soon as they are ready for the responsibility. This does not mean they should lose recess, just do something else that doesn't require respectful use of equipment. (See No. 11)

However, even in this case it might be more effective to focus on an immediate solutions: What was our agreement regarding respectful use of playground equipment? Could you two find a solution to your conflict on the Wheel of Choice? Would you be willing to put this problem on the class meeting agenda?

11. Take time for training

Provide many opportunities for skills training. Family/class meetings are a great opportunity to get children involved in sharing their ideas on how to treat equipment and people respectful. It is quite amazing to hear them say many of the things they have been “lectured about” that seemed to go in one ear and out the other. It is so much powerful when the ideas come from them.

12. Observe and wait

Kids often solve their own problems if allowed time. If not, wait for a “no conflict” time. Then focus on solutions.

A Logical Consequence by Some Other Name does Smell Sweeter. Following are several alternative names for Logical Consequences

- Curiosity questions to help children “explore” the consequences of their choices
- Decide what you will do
- Shut your mouth and act
- Family meeting agenda
- As soon as _____, then _____
- Follow-through
- Mistakes as opportunities to learn
- Time for training
- Letting go
- Allowing children to experience consequences (different from imposing consequences)
- Avoiding pampering, fixing, rescuing

Logical Consequences

Quotes from *Children the Challenge* by Rudolf Dreikurs

When we use the term “logical consequences,” parents so frequently misinterpret it as a new way to impose their demands upon children. The children see this for what it is – disguised punishment. (Children the Challenge, P. 80)

If logical consequences are used as a threat or “imposed” in anger, they cease being consequences and become punishment. Children are quick to discern the difference. They respond to logical consequences; they fight back when punished. (Children the Challenge, P. 79)

Logical consequences cannot be applied in a power struggle except with extreme caution because they usually deteriorate into punitive acts of retaliation. For this reason, natural consequences are always beneficial but logical consequences may backfire. (Children the Challenge, P. 84)

If, however, the parent is engaged in a power struggle with the child, he is inclined to use logical consequences as punishment and thereby forfeit the effectiveness of this method. P. 85

There is no logical connection if Mother denies Bobbie a favorite television program because he failed to take out the garbage...On the other hand, if Bobbie fails to complete his Saturday chores by the time the ball team gathers, it is quite logical that he cannot join the play until he finishes the job. (Children the Challenge, P. 85) **(As soon as...)**

If, however, Mother were to add, “Maybe this will be a lesson to you,” she would immediately turn the “consequence” into a punishment. (Children the Challenge, P. 77) **(Avoid piggybacking)**

There is always a misbehaving parent when a child becomes a feeding problem. (Children the Challenge, P.78) **(Attitude and Decide What You Will Do)**

Many times a logical consequence to fit the act will occur to us after a little thought. We merely need to ask ourselves, “What would happen if I didn’t interfere?” (Children the Challenge, P. 81) **(Natural Consequences)**

Sometimes the problem can even be solved by discussing it with the children and seeing what they have to offer. (Children the Challenge, P. 85) **(Getting children involved.)**